

ORIGINAL ARTICLE / ÖZGÜN ARAŞTIRMA



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Zero Hunger: A Study on the World Food Programme's (WFP) Communication Strategies on TikTok

Açlığa Son: Dünya Gıda Programı'nın (WFP) TikTok'taki İletişim Stratejileri Üzerine Bir Araştırma

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Abstract

Aim: This study analyzed the communication strategies employed by the World Food Programme (WFP) on the TikTok, with the aim of advancing scholarly understanding of the organization's digital communication frameworks and elucidating TikTok's function within the communicative practices of international entities engaged in sustainable development and global food security domains.

Method: The study conducted a content analysis of 534 videos shared on the organization's TikTok account between November 20, 2020, and April 25, 2025. This analysis identified and categorized the videos' thematic content, language, genres, objectives, emotional tones, formats, engagement metrics, spokespersons, and associated demographic characteristics of the spokespersons.

Results: The findings revealed that the organization extensively utilized elements such as subtitles, captions, music, and hashtags in its posts. Furthermore, it was observed that the account featured a variety of video genres and diverse emotional tones. This strategic combination was associated with a high level of user engagement. Additionally, the content demonstrated the inclusion of multiple languages, visibility of diverse ethnic identities, and a narrative style grounded in humanitarian storytelling, indicating the adoption of an inclusive digital communication strategy. However, it was also identified that the organization's TikTok content insufficiently addressed the needs of marginalized individuals and employed children in a manner that could be construed as emotional manipulation.

Conclusion: The study demonstrated that WFP effectively employed both technical and thematic elements on TikTok to reach a broad audience. However, it was observed that the content insufficiently addressed the needs of disadvantaged

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Geliş/Received: 29.05.2025
Kabul/Accepted: 09.09.2025

Zindan ÇAKICI, "Zero Hunger: A Study on the World Food Programme's (WFP) Communication Strategies on TikTok", İstanbul Gelisim University Journal of Social Sciences, 12 (3), Special Issue on Sustainability, 2025, pp. 1246-1262.

individuals and utilized children in a manner aimed at eliciting emotional responses. This research contributed to the literature by elucidating the role of TikTok in the communication strategies of international organizations operating in the fields of sustainable development and global food security.

Keywords

Sustainable Development, Global Food Security, Digital Communication, TikTok, World Food Programme (WFP)

Öz

Amaç: Bu çalışma, Dünya Gıda Programı'nın (WFP) TikTok'taki iletişim stratejilerini inceleyerek, kuruluşun dijital iletişim stratejilerine ve TikTok'un sürdürülebilir kalkınma ile küresel gıda güvenliği alanında faaliyet gösteren uluslararası kuruluşların iletişim stratejilerindeki rolüne ilişkin literatüre katkı sağlamayı amaçlamıştır.

Yöntem: Araştırmada, kuruluşun TikTok hesabında 20 Kasım 2020 ile 25 Nisan 2025 tarihleri arasında yayımlanan 534 video, içerik analizi tekniği ile incelenmiştir. Bu analiz ile videoların temaları, dili, türleri, amaçları, duygusal tonları, formatları, etkileşim düzeleri, sözcükleri ve sözcüklere ilişkin demografik veriler ortaya konulmuştur.

Bulgular: Bulgular, kuruluşun paylaşımlarında altyazı, açıklama, müzik ve hashtag gibi öğeleri yoğun biçimde kullandığını göstermiştir. Ayrıca, kuruluşun hesabında farklı video türlerine ve çeşitli duygusal tonlara yer verdiği tespit edilmiştir. Bu strateji sayesinde içeriklerin yüksek düzeyde etkileşim sağladığı görülmüştür. Bununla birlikte, kuruluşun içeriklerinde farklı dillere yer verdiği, farklı etnik kimlikleri görünür kıldığı ve insani hikâyelere dayalı bir anlatı biçimini tercih ettiği; bu yönleriyle kapsayıcı bir dijital iletişim stratejisi benimsediği saptanmıştır. Ancak, kuruluşun TikTok içeriklerinde dezavantajlı bireylerin ihtiyaçlarını yeterince dikkate almadığı ve çocukları duygusal manipülasyon amacıyla kullandığı tespit edilmiştir.

Sonuç: Çalışma, WFP'nin TikTok'ta hem teknik hem de tematik unsurları etkili biçimde kullanarak geniş kitlelere ulaştığını göstermiştir. Ancak, WFP'nin içeriklerinde dezavantajlı bireylerin ihtiyaçlarının yeterince gözetilmediği ve çocukların duygusal etki yaratmak amacıyla kullanıldığı görülmüştür. Çalışma, TikTok'un sürdürülebilir kalkınma ile küresel gıda güvenliği alanında faaliyet yürüten uluslararası kuruluşların iletişim süreçlerindeki rolüne dair literatüre katkı sunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma, Küresel Gıda Güvenliği, Dijital İletişim, TikTok, Dünya Gıda Programı (WFP)

Introduction

Sustainability constitutes a holistic development paradigm aimed at ensuring long-term equilibrium and stability across environmental, economic, and social domains (Barker, 2025, p. 2). In alignment with this framework, the United Nations institutionalized sustainable development on a global scale in 2015 by adopting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Yi et al., 2025, p. 12). These goals encompass a wide spectrum of global challenges, ranging from poverty alleviation and the reduction of inequalities to the promotion of health and the mitigation of climate change. Among these, Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG-2), titled "Zero Hunger," specifically targets the global food insecurity crisis (Bade & Reichenbach, 2025, p. 4). Recent empirical data indicate that over 300 million individuals worldwide are currently at risk of acute hunger (WFP, 2025). In response to this global emergency, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), established in 1961, has been conducting multidimensional humanitarian operations aimed at achieving SDG-2 at a global scale (Pabarri & Tasan, 2025, p. 62). In pursuing these objectives, the WFP has been identified as actively utilizing social media platforms. Notably, in an effort to foster awareness of sustainability and global food security, and to engage with younger demographics, the organization launched an

official TikTok account under the username @worldfoodprogramme on 20 November 2020. A review of the literature reveals a gap concerning scholarly analyses of the organization's overall social media strategies, and particularly its communicative practices on TikTok. Therefore, an examination of WFP's strategic communication on TikTok is not only instrumental in elucidating the organization's digital presence, but also vital for understanding the mechanisms through which sustainability-oriented global objectives are conveyed to younger audiences. This study aims to investigate the WFP's communication strategies on TikTok. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the academic discourse by offering empirical insights into the organization's digital communication approaches, the communicative utility of TikTok for international institutions engaged in sustainability and food security advocacy, and the platform's potential in cultivating public awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals.

This study initially undertook a review of the existing body of literature with the objective of identifying prevailing research gaps and delineating the scholarly contribution of the present inquiry. Within this context, the communication strategies employed on the TikTok platform by a diverse array of institutions, including commercial enterprises, universities, healthcare providers, media and publishing organizations, technology firms, local governments, political parties, and international organizations, were analyzed. Subsequently, an examination of the WFP's historical trajectory, institutional mandate, operational domains, and digital presence was conducted. Based on these preliminary analyses, the research questions were defined, and a methodologically appropriate research method and technique were determined to address these questions. Furthermore, the population and sampling frameworks were established to delineate the empirical boundaries of the study. Throughout this process, potential limitations that could influence the validity and reliability of the research were considered. The WFP launched its official and verified TikTok account under the username @worldfoodprogramme on 20 November 2020 and commenced content dissemination on the same date. For the purposes of this investigation, a content analysis was conducted on all materials published by the WFP from its inaugural post on 20 November 2020 to 25 April 2025, which marked the commencement of the data collection phase. During the analytical process, each video was coded according to a range of variables, including thematic content, linguistic attributes, format types, communicative objectives, informational components, affective tone, structural format, interaction metrics, and the presence of spokespersons. In addition, various demographic characteristics of the featured individuals, such as gender, age, and ethnicity, were also coded. The dataset obtained was subsequently subjected to visualization through specialized analytical tools, followed by an interpretive analysis. In the concluding section, the principal findings of the study were synthesized, and the theoretical and practical contributions to the field were discussed. Furthermore, considering the identified limitations of the research, a series of recommendations for future studies were articulated, along with an evaluation of how such prospective investigations could address existing gaps in the literature.

The Utilization of TikTok by UN World Food Programme (WFP): A Literature Review

A review of literature indicates that institutions have operationalized platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram to pursue a wide array of communicative functions, including the reinforcement of corporate identity, augmentation of sales metrics, cultivation of public awareness, promotion of institutional events, facilitation of real-time crisis communication, and orchestration of agenda-setting processes (Gong & Ye, 2021; Yaqin et al., 2022; Özdemir, 2023; Ndekwa & Kalugendo, 2024; Ma & Zhang, 2025). Within the contemporary digital media ecology, TikTok has emerged as a salient and rapidly institutionalized platform for enhancing organizational visibility and engaging digitally native audiences (Maghfiroh & Mandasari, 2024, p. 57; Çakıcı, 2025, p. 136). This platform, originally developed under the name Musical.ly in Shanghai, China in 2014, enables users to generate and disseminate short-form audiovisual content, participate in hashtag-oriented challenges, perform duet and reaction-based interactions, explore trending media, and conduct livestreaming activities (Bermúdez, 2025, p. 7). Following its acquisition and subsequent restructuring by ByteDance in 2017, the application was bifurcated into two market-specific iterations: Douyin, which was launched for the Chinese domestic market in 2016, and TikTok, which was introduced to the global digital

landscape in 2018 (Pang, 2025, s.10). The platform has exhibited exponential diffusion dynamics, and as of 2025, TikTok ranks as the fifth most extensively utilized social media platform worldwide, trailing only YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. It maintains an operational presence in over 160 countries, with an estimated user base exceeding 1.5 billion active accounts. Particularly among individuals aged 16 to 34, TikTok constitutes a primary digital arena, with daily video consumption surpassing one billion views (Kemp, 2025, pp. 413-558). Accumulated empirical evidence underscores the extensive institutional appropriation of TikTok across multiple domains. Organizations have leveraged the platform to implement a broad spectrum of communicative strategies, including educational outreach, health communication, news dissemination, brand and service promotion, financial literacy campaigns, civic engagement initiatives, political messaging, and public opinion engineering (Zhang et al., 2021; Gesmundo et al., 2022; Hati & Yuniati, 2023; Castillo-Abdul et al., 2024; Çakıcı, 2025). Notably, international organizations operating within the domains of sustainable development and global food security have employed TikTok as a vehicle for digital advocacy, particularly aimed at mobilizing youth constituencies. One of the most prominent institutional actors in this regard is the United Nations World Food Programme.

The United Nations was established on 24 October 1945 with the primary objectives of maintaining international peace and security, fostering intergovernmental cooperation, and safeguarding human rights (Çakıcı, 2025, p. 140; Turgay, 2025, p. 111). The institutional origins of the organization can be traced back to the League of Nations, which was established in 1919 under the Treaty of Versailles. This historical trajectory was further consolidated by the Atlantic Charter of 1941 and the Declaration by the United Nations in 1942, jointly endorsed by 26 countries (Kornprobst & Redo, 2024, p. 1). In 1945, the San Francisco Conference convened 50 states, which jointly drafted the United Nations Charter and thereby institutionalized the organization's legal and operational foundations. Headquartered in New York, the United Nations currently comprises 193 member states (Yumnam et al., 2024, p. 1). The UN operates across an expansive range of domains including human rights protection, sustainable development, environmental governance, disarmament, humanitarian assistance, global public health, education, and gender equality (Sorooshian, 2024, p. 2). These operational mandates are implemented through a network of specialized agencies and subsidiary programs, including UNESCO, UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO, and UNEP. Among these, the World Food Programme (WFP) functions as a central actor in addressing global hunger (Dağ & Akbay, 2022, p. 186; Kılıç, 2022, pp. 65-67; Açık-Taşar, 2023, p. 219). The WFP was established in 1961 through a joint resolution of the UN General Assembly and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and became a permanent agency of the UN in 1963. Since its inception, the WFP has played a pivotal role in combatting global food insecurity. During the 1980s and 1990s, the agency expanded its emergency response capacity in both natural disasters and conflict-affected zones. From the 2000s onwards, its activities evolved beyond immediate relief to include long-term developmental interventions aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this context, it has implemented school feeding programmes, initiated local procurement schemes, and adopted climate-responsive risk mitigation strategies (Erçorumlu, 2025, p. 145). In alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the WFP contributes primarily to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). In recognition of its extensive humanitarian impact, the WFP was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020. Currently, it operates in more than 120 countries and reaches approximately 100 million individuals annually through its global interventions (Havnevik, 2021, pp. 371-386; Doğan & Özaltın, 2022, p. 83).

The WFP has emerged as one of the most influential international organizations in the field of humanitarian assistance and food security, owing to its extensive global operations targeting hunger alleviation and emergency response (Fan & Liu, 2024, p. 1; Zada, 2025, p. 1). In an effort to promote sustainable development and mitigate food insecurity, the organization actively utilizes digital communication tools. WFP has established verified official accounts on several major social media platforms, including Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn, thereby enhancing its digital visibility. On 20 November 2020, the organization launched a verified account under the username @worldfoodprogramme on TikTok, a platform that, as of today, has more than 1.5 billion active users and is particularly popular among younger audiences. Since then, WFP has increasingly focused on producing content for TikTok with the aim of raising awareness about sustainable development and

global food security while fostering engagement with youth demographics. Despite the growing strategic use of social media by international organizations, a review of the academic literature reveals a significant research gap: empirical studies specifically addressing WFP’s social media practices remain scarce, and scholarly investigations into its TikTok-based communication strategies are nonexistent. In this context, an analysis of WFP’s communication practices on TikTok is not only instrumental in understanding the organization’s digital visibility but also critical in assessing how sustainability-oriented global objectives are being communicated to youth demographics. This study aims to examine WFP’s communication strategies on TikTok. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the literature by offering insights into WFP’s digital engagement practices, the communicative functions of TikTok for international organizations working in the domains of sustainable development and global food security, and the platform’s potential for fostering awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among youth demographics.

Method

This study investigates the communication strategies implemented by the WFP on the TikTok. In this context, the analysis encompasses videos disseminated through the organization’s TikTok account, scrutinizing them across multiple dimensions including thematic categorization, linguistic features, content typology, communicative intent, affective tone, formal attributes, levels of audience engagement, as well as the identities and demographic characteristics of the featured speakers. The objective of this research is to augment the extant body of knowledge concerning WFP’s digital communication methodologies and to critically assess the function of TikTok within the strategic communication paradigms of international entities engaged in sustainable development and global food security initiatives. This study was structured around the central research question of what strategic objectives the World Food Programme (WFP) seeks to advance through its use of the TikTok platform. To address this overarching question, the investigation further asked which thematic categories are most salient in WFP’s TikTok videos, which video formats appear most frequently and what emotional tones these formats convey, which actors or social groups are most prominently represented across the content, and how these videos perform with respect to key engagement metrics.

Table 1. Coding Scheme for TikTok Posts

Video Message Function	Information, Action, Community
Theme	
Video Format	Video Length, Subtitle, Caption, Music, Hashtag, Language
Video Type	Oral Speech, Documentary, News, Acting, Pictorial Slideshow, TikTok Trend, Animated Infographic
Emotional Tone	Hope/Encouragement, Alarm/Concern, Sadness, Neutral, Humor, Empathy
Characters Usage	General Public, WFP Staff and Representatives, Public Figures, Absent
Gender of Characters	Female, Male
Age of Characters	Child, Youth, Adult
Ethnic Background of Characters	
Engagement	Views, Likes, Save, Forwards, Comments

To address the research questions, a content analysis was conducted on all posts published via the WFP’s verified TikTok account, @worldfoodprogramme, from the initial publication date of November 20, 2020, through April 25, 2025, marking the commencement of the present study. Within this temporal scope, a total of 534 posts were identified and catalogued. Corresponding URLs were archived in an Excel file to facilitate data management and retrieval. Each post was manually coded by the researcher using a coding scheme developed based on the literature. The coding framework, as shown in Table 1, began with categorization according to the functional purpose of

each video. Accordingly, informative videos were coded as information; videos aimed at engaging followers as community; and videos targeting followers to take specific actions as action (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Secondly, the main theme of each video was coded. Due to thematic diversity, no predefined code list was used; instead, each video was watched, and its theme was determined by the researcher during the coding process (Çakıcı, 2025). Thirdly, the formal characteristics of the videos were coded. This included each video's length and language, as well as the frequency of subtitle, caption, music, and hashtag use (McDonnell et al., 2024). Fourthly, the type of videos was coded. Videos featuring theatrical narration or dramatic performances were coded as acting; videos with animations conveying visual and textual information as animated infographic; videos where characters directly addressed the camera as oral speech; videos showing sequential photos and text as pictorial slideshow; documentary-style videos presenting real-life excerpts as documentary; videos following TikTok-specific popular trends as TikTok trends; and videos reporting current events or significant situations as news (Li et al., 2021).

Fifthly, the emotional tone of the videos was coded. Content related to crises, danger, or emergencies, evoking alarm or concern, was coded as alarm/concern; videos containing success stories or morale-boosting messages aiming to create hope were coded as hope/encouragement; videos themed around loss or tragedy, eliciting sadness, were coded as sadness; content generating empathy and understanding toward others' situations as empathy; humorous and entertaining videos as humor; and purely informational videos without emotional appeal as neutral (Wang & Ji, 2015; Çakıcı, 2025). Sixthly, speakers appearing in the videos were coded. Videos featuring socially recognized figures were coded as public figures; videos with WFP staff and representatives as WFP staff and representatives; videos including ordinary individuals as general public; and videos without speakers as absent (Li et al., 2021). Seventhly, the demographic characteristics of speakers, such as gender, age, and ethnic origin, were coded. Gender was coded as male or female; age as child, youth, or adult; and ethnicity was coded based on direct information presented in the videos (Çakıcı, 2025). Lastly, engagement metrics of the videos were coded, including likes, comments, views, saves, and forwards (Li and Xie, 2020; Çakıcı and Meriç, 2024). All WFP TikTok posts during the specified period were coded within categories derived from the literature. However, interpretative commentary on the posts was methodologically excluded from the analysis.

To ensure the validity of the study, the category and coding framework, developed based on a review of the literature, was reviewed by two Assistant Professors from the Faculty of Communication. Following their evaluations, the coding schema was revised in accordance with the feedback received. To enhance the reliability of the coding process, the researcher independently coded 10% of the posts selected through random sampling. Subsequently, the coding guide was submitted in written form to another Assistant Professor from the Faculty of Communication, and its content was verbally explained. The second coder independently coded the same 10% of the content that had been previously coded by the primary researcher. An inter-coder agreement of approximately 84,5% was achieved. The majority of discrepancies between the coders were found to stem from inherently interpretive categories, particularly those related to the emotional tone and communicative intent of the videos. These discrepancies were discussed between the coders until consensus was reached, and final coding decisions were made accordingly. According to the literature, an inter-coder agreement above 80% is considered acceptable for ensuring reliability in content analysis (Patton, 2002; Gheyle & Jacobs, 2017). In light of this standard, the present study met the required threshold, thereby confirming the reliability of the coding procedure employed.

Findings

Between 20 November 2020 and 25 April 2025, the official TikTok account of the WFP disseminated a total of 534 videos. As illustrated in Table 2, the durations of these videos varied between 3 and 396 seconds. Short-form videos were employed to facilitate rapid message delivery, while longer videos were utilized to convey detailed information on a range of thematic issues. The analysis determined that all videos featured subtitles, indicating WFP's explicit emphasis on accessibility and inclusivity within its content strategy. Additionally, captions were integrated into nearly all videos,

reflecting an institutional effort to contextualize content and enhance message comprehension. A substantial proportion of the videos incorporated background music, suggesting that WFP adopted an effective communication strategy aimed at augmenting the emotional resonance of its content and intensifying viewer engagement. Moreover, the widespread use of hashtags reflects a deliberate strategy to increase content visibility and algorithmic discoverability within the platform’s digital ecosystem. The linguistic distribution of the content revealed a predominance of English-language videos, which is consistent with WFP’s objective of engaging a global audience. Nonetheless, the presence of additional languages, including Arabic, Spanish, Ukrainian, French, Swahili, Italian, Khmer, Malagasy, Nepali, Sign Language, Bengali, Persian, Filipino, Hausa, Kikongo, Krio, Portuguese, Sinhala, Tajik, and Tamil, demonstrates a partial adherence to the principle of multilingualism. However, the infrequent use of sign language indicates a limitation in ensuring full communicative accessibility for individuals with hearing impairments. This shortfall suggests that WFP’s commitment to inclusive communication practices was not comprehensively operationalized within its TikTok content.

A total of 534 videos shared on the WFP’s official TikTok account received 116,784,786 views, indicating that the content reached a broad and diverse audience. The videos collectively garnered 3,322,867 likes, suggesting a generally positive reception among followers. Furthermore, the 39,158 comments posted across the videos demonstrated that users actively engaged with the content, thereby contributing to the formation of an interactive discursive space within the platform. In addition, the videos were shared 87,794 times and saved 98,315 times, reflecting users’ willingness not only to disseminate the content within their own social networks but also to revisit and engage with the content repeatedly. These metrics collectively suggest that WFP’s TikTok presence represents an effective digital communication strategy, capable of generating both widespread reach and substantive audience interaction.

Table 2. Video Content Format and Engagement Metrics

Video Length	3 s to 396 s	
Video Format	Number	Percentage (%)
Subtitle	534	100%
Caption	533	99,81%
Music	524	98,13%
Hashtag	487	91,20%
Language	Number	Percentage (%)
English	477	89,33%
Arabic	30	5,62%
Spanish	7	1,31%
Ukrainian	4	0,75%
French	3	0,56%
Swahili	2	0,37%
Italian	2	0,37%
Khmer	2	0,37%
Malagasy	2	0,37%
Nepali	2	0,37%
Sign Language	2	0,37%
Bengali	1	0,19%
Persian	1	0,19%
Filipino	1	0,19%
Hausa	1	0,19%
Kikongo	1	0,19%

Table 2. Devamı

Video Length	3 s to 396 s	
Language	Number	Percentage (%)
Krio	1	0,19%
Portuguese	1	0,19%
Sinhala	1	0,19%
Tajik	1	0,19%
Tamil	1	0,19%
Engagement	Number	
Views	116,784,786	
Likes	3,322,867	
Save	98,315	
Forwards	87,794	
Comments	39,158	

As shown in Table 3, the analysis revealed that out of 534 examined posts, 505 primarily aimed to disseminate information on topics aligned with the WFP’s global mission to combat hunger, such as food crises, famine, and sustainability. A total of 24 posts were identified as calls to action, encouraging followers to donate, purchase products, participate in events, or support social movements. Only 5 posts were designed to express gratitude to followers or to engage with them directly. These findings indicate that WFP predominantly adopts an informative approach in its TikTok content strategy. Conversely, content intended to foster direct interaction with followers or to mobilize them toward specific actions remains notably limited.

As illustrated in Table 3, eleven dominant themes emerged across the 534 videos analyzed. A significant portion of the content highlighted WFP’s emergency food aid operations in crisis-affected regions such as Palestine, Sudan, and Yemen. These videos frequently depicted WFP personnel distributing food parcels to communities facing food insecurity due to civil conflict or natural disasters. Such visual narratives aimed to convey both the logistical efforts of humanitarian aid delivery and a sense of urgency to the viewers. Another prevalent theme centered on the issue of food insecurity and famine. These videos explained the impact of factors such as armed conflict on food crises and offered followers strategies to mitigate these challenges. In this context, WFP promoted plant-based nutrition, advocated for reducing food waste through the reuse of leftovers, and encouraged conscious consumer behavior. A notable subset of the videos focused on WFP’s rural development and farmer support programs. These clips featured scenes from countries such as Niger, Ecuador, South Sudan, Kenya, and Afghanistan, where WFP provided farmers with fertilizer, seeds, clean water, and technical assistance. The videos highlighted training efforts in vegetable cultivation, grain storage, and rainwater harvesting systems, reflecting WFP’s strategic objective to enhance the sustainability of rural production and to foster long-term food security. In addition, several videos addressed the organization’s institutional identity. These videos communicated WFP’s vision, mission, and values while showcasing the logistical tools it employs, such as aircraft, trucks, and drones. The organization’s international recognition, including its receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020, was also emphasized to bolster institutional credibility. A separate category of content focused on WFP’s nutrition programs for children. These videos highlighted the provision of food assistance to infants and school-aged children in economically vulnerable countries. The preparation and distribution of predominantly plant-based meals, as well as scenes depicting children consuming these meals, were prominently featured.

A portion of the videos focused on the nexus between climate change and food crisis. These videos contextualized the impact of the climate crisis on food production by highlighting how droughts, floods, and extreme weather events disrupt agricultural activities in specific geographic regions. The content also presented solution-oriented approaches, showcasing WFP’s intervention and adaptation

programs aimed at mitigating climate-related threats to food systems. Furthermore, global events such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP) and the UN Biodiversity Conference were featured to inform viewers about international efforts addressing the implications of climate change on food security. Another thematic cluster emphasized food assistance programs for refugees. These videos depicted the delivery of essential food aid to populations residing in refugee camps across various countries, with frequent references to emergency relief provided to Rohingya and Ukrainian refugees. Additionally, several videos showcased WFP’s support for food entrepreneurship initiatives in economically disadvantaged and food-insecure regions. These videos highlighted the entrepreneurial efforts of both women and men in the food production sector, alongside the financial and logistical support provided by WFP. This content illustrated how the organization seeks to foster economic development through the promotion of local food enterprises. A smaller subset of the content focused on global hunger statistics. These videos presented quantitative data on the number of people facing hunger worldwide, contributing to the viewers’ awareness of the scope and urgency of the issue. Similarly, another small portion of the videos featured celebrations of international observances such as Earth Day, Environment Day, Refugee Day, World Soil Day, and Spicy Food Day. The majority of these commemorative events were found to align closely with WFP’s areas of operation and advocacy. Finally, a minimal number of videos addressed the theme of gender equality. In these instances, women’s rights were foregrounded, the empowerment of women was emphasized, and explicit messages promoting gender equality were communicated.

Table 3. Functional and Thematic Taxonomy of TikTok Videos

Video Message Function	Number	Percentage (%)
Information	505	94,56%
Action	24	4,49%
Community	5	0,94%
Total	534	100%
Theme	Number	Percentage (%)
Emergency Food Assistance	157	29,40%
Food Insecurity and Sustainable Solutions	85	15,91%
Rural Development and Farmer Support Programs	72	13,48%
Organizational Identity and Promotion	58	10,86%
Child Nutrition Programs	37	6,93%
Climate Change and Food Crisis	35	6,55%
Refugee-Focused Food Assistance Programs	30	5,62%
Support Programs for Food Entrepreneurship	30	5,62%
Global Hunger Statistics	12	2,25%
Commemoration of International Days	9	1,69%
Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment	9	1,69%
Total	534	100%

It was identified that a total of 1,167 hashtags were used across the 534 TikTok videos shared by the WFP account. This finding suggests that WFP adopted an intensive hashtag strategy aimed at maximizing content visibility and enhancing user engagement on the platform. As shown in Figure 1, the organization predominantly shared informational content and frequently employed the hashtag #LearnOnTikTok, aligning with this communicative intent. Thematic analyses revealed that videos centered on humanitarian assistance in crisis zones commonly included both country-specific hashtags such as #Sudan, #Ukraine, #Afghanistan, and #Haiti, as well as broader tags like #Humanitarian. Content addressing food insecurity frequently featured hashtags such as #Invisiblemeal and #Stopthewaste, emphasizing the urgency of food waste reduction and hidden hunger issues. In videos related to support for farmers, hashtags like #Sustainability, #Backtoearth, and #Farmers were

imagery to communicate specific issues or events. The TikTok trend type encompassed 22 videos that incorporated platform-specific trends as a communicative mechanism to increase relatability and viewer interaction. Lastly, only 2 videos were categorized as animated infographics, in which data and key messages were visually represented through animation techniques. These results demonstrated that WFP utilized varied video typologies to capture audience attention, facilitate effective message transmission, and enhance engagement on the TikTok.

With regard to emotional tone, the analysis revealed that WFP’s TikTok content incorporated a wide range of affective expressions. As illustrated in Table 4, the most frequently observed emotional tone was hope/encouragement. These videos conveyed messages intended to instill motivation, optimism, and psychological resilience in viewers. The second most prevalent emotional tone was alarm/concern, through which the organization aimed to raise awareness regarding critical risks and urgent crises. The third most prominent emotional tone was sadness, found in videos that depicted issues such as hunger, poverty, and disasters to evoke emotional resonance and humanitarian concern. A limited number of videos employed humor as a communicative tool to present messages in an entertaining and accessible manner. Similarly, a small number of videos conveyed empathy, encouraging viewers to emotionally identify with affected populations. Finally, some videos did not exhibit a clear emotional tone and instead focused exclusively on the transmission of factual information. Overall, these findings indicated that WFP employed diverse emotional strategies to elicit varied affective responses, thereby enhancing the communicative efficacy of its humanitarian messaging on the TikTok.

Table 4. Video Genre Types and Their Associated Emotional Themes

Video Type	Number	Percentage (%)
Oral Speech	148	27,72%
Documentary	122	22,85%
News	100	18,73%
Acting	94	17,60%
Pictorial Slideshow	46	8,61%
TikTok Trend	22	4,12%
Animated Infographic	2	0,37 %
Total	534	100%
Emotion of the Videos	Number	Percentage (%)
Hope/Encouragement	349	65,36%
Alarm/Concern	98	18,35%
Sadness	50	9,36%
Neutral	23	4,31%
Humor	7	1,31%
Empathy	7	1,31%
Total	534	100%

The study identified that the WFP incorporated various types of characters in its TikTok videos. Table 5 demonstrated that WFP predominantly foregrounded ordinary community members, adopting a narrative style rooted in humanitarian stories. This approach aligned with WFP’s mission to focus on local communities, reflecting a consistent communication strategy. Additionally, the data indicated that WFP frequently employed its own staff and representatives in the videos, thereby presenting an official stance. Conversely, public figures such as artists, journalists, athletes, and politicians were infrequently utilized to convey messages related to sustainable development. This finding revealed that WFP’s communication strategy prioritized authentic narratives and direct voices from the field over reliance on the influence of public figures.

Table 5. Quantitative Assessment of Characters in Video Content

Character in Video	Number	Percentage (%)
General Public	322	60,30%
WFP Staff and Representatives	194	36,33%
Absent	15	2,81%
Public Figures	3	0,56%
Total	534	100%

As shown in Table 6, information regarding the ethnic backgrounds of individuals was provided in 294 videos. Within this thematic scope, Palestinians, Sudanese, Afghans, Congolese, Ukrainians, South Sudanese, Malagasy, and Cambodians were featured more frequently compared to other ethnic groups. Additionally, individuals identified as Yemeni, Egyptian, Ugandan, Bangladeshi, Bolivian, Haitian, Mauritanian, Kenyan, Guatemalan, Lebanese, Nicaraguan, Malawian, Syrian, Zimbabwean, Somali, Venezuelan, Nigerien, Jordanian, Turkish, Chadian, Nepali, Sierra Leonean, Mozambican, Sri Lankan, Tajik, Salvadoran, Grenadian, Laotian, Libyan, Namibian, Nigerian, Pakistani, Togolese, and Zambian were represented to varying extents. Conversely, Americans, Angolans, Djiboutians, Ecuadorians, Ethiopians, Gambians, Guineans, South Africans, South Koreans, Hondurans, Iraqis, British, Japanese, Cameroonians, Canadians, Colombians, São Toméans, Senegalese, and Tunisians appeared in only a single video each. These findings indicated that WFP adopted a deliberate content strategy emphasizing ethnic diversity to increase the visibility of vulnerable communities in crisis-affected regions.

Table 6. Ethnicity Distribution in Videos

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage (%)	Ethnicity	Number	Percentage (%)
Unspecified	240	44,94%	Mozambican	3	0,56%
Palestinian	57	10,67%	Sri Lankan	3	0,56%
Sudanese	18	3,37%	Tajik	3	0,56%
Afghan	16	2,99%	Salvadoran	2	0,37%
Congolese	15	2,81%	Grenadian	2	0,37%
Ukrainian	12	2,25%	Laotian	2	0,37%
South Sudanese	12	2,25%	Libyan	2	0,37%
Malagasy	10	1,87%	Namibian	2	0,37%
Cambodian	10	1,87%	Nigerian/Niger	2	0,37%
Yemeni	9	1,69%	Pakistani	2	0,37%
Egyptian	8	1,50%	Togolese	2	0,37%
Ugandan	8	1,50%	Zambian	2	0,37%
Bangladeshi	7	1,31%	American	1	0,19%
Bolivian	7	1,31%	Angolan	1	0,19%
Haitian	7	1,31%	Djiboutian	1	0,19%
Mauritanian	7	1,31%	Ecuadorian	1	0,19%
Kenyan	6	1,12%	Ethiopian	1	0,19%
Guatemalan	6	1,12%	Gambian	1	0,19%
Lebanese	5	0,94%	Guinean	1	0,19%
Nicaraguan	5	0,94%	South African	1	0,19%
Malawian	5	0,94%	South Korean	1	0,19%
Syrian	5	0,94%	Honduran	1	0,19%

Table 6. Ethnicity Distribution in Videos

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage (%)	Ethnicity	Number	Percentage (%)
Zimbabwean	5	0,94%	Iraqi	1	0,19%
Somali	4	0,75%	British	1	0,19%
Venezuelan	4	0,75%	Japanese	1	0,19%
Nigerien	4	0,75%	Cameroonian	1	0,19%
Jordanian	4	0,75%	Canadian	1	0,19%
Turkish	3	0,56%	Colombian	1	0,19%
Chadian	3	0,56%	São Toméan	1	0,19%
Nepali	3	0,56%	Senegalese	1	0,19%
Sierra Leonean	3	0,56%	Tunisian	1	0,19%

As presented in Table 7, the majority of individuals featured in the videos were female, whereas male representation was comparatively lower. This pattern indicated an institutional orientation aimed at increasing the visibility of women, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals’ objective to promote gender equality. Furthermore, Table 7 revealed that adults constituted the predominant age group in the videos, with youth and children being less frequently represented. It was observed that children appeared primarily in content with high emotional intensity. The use of children in such emotionally charged videos raised significant ethical concerns in humanitarian communication. Conversely, considering TikTok’s widespread popularity among younger demographics, the relatively low representation of youth within the content posed a strategic limitation in effectively reaching the platform’s core target audience.

Table 7. Gender and Age Distribution in Videos

Gender	Number	Percentage (%)
Female	430	80,52%
Male	369	69,08%
None	15	2,81%
Age	Number	Percentage (%)
Adult	475	88,95%
Youth	300	56,18%
Child	224	41,95%
None	15	2,81%

Conclusion

This study aimed to contribute to the scholarly understanding of digital communication strategies employed by international organizations focused on sustainable development and global food security, with particular attention to TikTok as a communication medium. A content analysis was conducted on all posts published on the World Food Programme’s official TikTok account. The findings revealed extensive use of multimodal elements such as subtitles, captions, music, and hashtags across the videos. Additionally, a variety of video types and emotional tones were utilized, resulting in broad audience reach and high engagement levels. The content predominantly addressed sustainable development and global food security, providing detailed information, proposing solutions, and encouraging audience mobilization. Furthermore, the videos exhibited linguistic diversity, highlighted various ethnic identities, emphasized female representation, and employed a narrative approach centered on humanitarian storytelling. These results indicate that the WFP adopted an inclusive and sophisticated digital communication approach.

However, several limitations and ethical concerns were identified within WFP’s TikTok communication practices. Sign language was minimally incorporated, restricting accessibility for

hearing-impaired individuals and compromising communicative equity. Although TikTok's user base is largely young, the videos predominantly featured adults, potentially limiting effective engagement with the platform's core demographic. The frequent inclusion of children in emotionally intense videos raised ethical issues concerning the instrumentalization of minors in humanitarian messaging. To address these concerns, it is recommended that the WFP implement measures such as the systematic inclusion of sign language to improve accessibility, increased representation of young individuals to better align with platform demographics, and the development of a transparent, ethics-based content policy aimed at preventing exploitative use of children in emotive content. These actions are essential to enhance the ethical integrity, inclusivity, and accessibility of the WFP's TikTok communications.

While this research provided important insights into the WFP's communication strategy on TikTok, the existing literature remains insufficient. Future studies should employ advanced computational techniques such as text mining and sentiment analysis to analyze user comments and better understand audience reception. Comparative assessments of thematic video categories through engagement metrics should be conducted to identify the most effective content. Additionally, the influence of audiovisual elements like music, subtitles, and text overlays on engagement should be examined. Temporal factors, including posting schedules, warrant investigation regarding their impact on viewership and interaction. Finally, analyses disaggregated by demographic variables are necessary to reveal detailed patterns of content consumption and engagement. These methodological advancements will enable a more comprehensive analysis of social media communication strategies employed by international organizations working in sustainable development and global food security.

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Özet

Birleşmiş Milletler, 2015 yılında 17 Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Amacı belirleyerek sürdürülebilir kalkınmayı küresel ölçekte somutlaştırmıştır. Bu amaçlar, yoksulluğun azaltılmasından eşitsizliklerin giderilmesine, sağlıklı yaşamın desteklenmesinden iklim değişikliğiyle mücadeleye kadar geniş bir yelpazeyi kapsamaktadır. Bu hedefler arasında yer alan “Açlığa Son” (SDG-2) hedefi, özellikle küresel gıda güvensizliği sorununa odaklanmaktadır. Güncel veriler, dünya genelinde 300 milyondan fazla insanın akut açlık riskiyle karşı karşıya olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu kapsamda, 1961 yılında kurulan Birleşmiş Milletler Dünya Gıda Programı (WFP), “Açlığa Son” hedefine ulaşmak için küresel çapta etkin ve çok yönlü insani yardım faaliyetleri yürütmektedir. Kuruluşun, bu faaliyetlerini yürütürken sosyal medya platformlarını aktif bir biçimde kullandığı tespit edilmiştir. Kuruluşun, sürdürülebilir kalkınma ve küresel gıda güvenliği konusunda farkındalık yaratmak ve genç kitlelerle etkileşim kurmak amacıyla 20 Kasım 2020 tarihinde TikTok'ta @worldfoodprogramme kullanıcı adıyla resmi bir hesap açtığı görülmüştür. Literatür incelendiğinde, kuruluşun genel sosyal medya stratejilerine ya da özellikle TikTok üzerindeki iletişim pratiklerine odaklanan çalışmalara rastlanılmamıştır. Bu nedenle, WFP'nin TikTok'taki iletişim stratejilerinin kapsamlı biçimde incelenmesi, yalnızca kurumsal görünürlüğü anlamak açısından değil, aynı zamanda sürdürülebilirlik temelli küresel hedeflerin genç kitlelere aktarılma biçimlerini analiz etmek açısından da önem taşımaktadır. Bu çalışma, WFP'nin TikTok'taki iletişim stratejilerini incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Böylece, WFP'nin dijital iletişim stratejilerine, TikTok'un sürdürülebilir kalkınma ile küresel gıda güvenliği alanında faaliyet yürüten uluslararası kuruluşların iletişim süreçlerindeki rolüne ve bu platformun sürdürülebilir kalkınma hedeflerine yönelik farkındalık

oluşturmada taşıdığı potansiyele ilişkin literatüre bir katkı sunulması hedeflenmiştir. Araştırmada, kuruluşun TikTok hesabında 20 Kasım 2020 ile 25 Nisan 2025 tarihleri arasında yayımlanan 534 video, içerik analizi ile incelenmiştir. Bu analiz ile videoların temaları, dili, türleri, amaçları, duygusal tonları, formatları, etkileşim düzeleri, sözcükleri ve sözcüklere ilişkin demografik veriler ortaya konulmuştur.

Bulgular, kuruluşun TikTok paylaşımlarında altyazı, açıklama, müzik ve hashtag gibi öğeleri yoğun biçimde kullandığını göstermiştir. Ayrıca, kuruluşun TikTok hesabında farklı video türlerine ve çeşitli duygusal tonlara yer verdiği tespit edilmiştir. Bu strateji sayesinde, içeriklerin geniş kitleler tarafından izlendiği ve yüksek düzeyde etkileşim sağlandığı görülmüştür. Bununla birlikte, WFP'nin TikTok içeriklerinde çoğunlukla sürdürülebilir kalkınma ve küresel gıda güvenliği konularında detaylı bilgiler verdiği, çözüm önerileri sunduğu ve takipçileri harekete geçmeye teşvik ettiği saptanmıştır. Ayrıca, içeriklerde birden çok dil kullanıldığı, farklı etnik kimliklerin görünür kılındığı, kadınların daha fazla temsil edildiği ve insani hikâyelere dayalı bir anlatı biçiminin tercih edildiği tespit edilmiştir. Bu bulgular, WFP'nin kapsayıcı bir dijital iletişim stratejisi benimsediğini göstermiştir. Bununla birlikte, WFP'nin TikTok iletişim stratejisinde bazı sınırlılıklar ve etik açıdan sorun teşkil eden uygulamalar olduğu saptanmıştır. Öncelikle, videolarda işaret diline çok sınırlı şekilde yer verildiği tespit edilmiştir. Bu durum, engelli bireylerin içeriklere erişimini zorlaştırmaktadır. Ayrıca, TikTok genç odaklı bir platform olmasına rağmen, içeriklerde daha çok yetişkin bireylerin öne çıktığı görülmüştür. Bu durum, platformun hedef kitlesine ulaşma konusunda sınırlılıklar yaratabilmektedir. Öte yandan, çocukların sıklıkla duygusal yoğunluğu yüksek içeriklerde yer aldığı saptanmıştır. Küçük yaştaki bireylerin bu tür videolarda kullanılması, etik açıdan bir sorun teşkil etmektedir. Bu bağlamda, WFP'nin TikTok içeriklerinde tespit edilen sorunların giderilmesi için çeşitli adımlar atması gerekmektedir. Videolara işaret dili eklenerek, işitme engelli bireylerin içeriklere eşit erişimi sağlanmalıdır. İçeriklerde genç bireylerin temsili artırılarak platformun hedef kitlesiyle daha etkili bir bağ kurulmalıdır. WFP, çocukların duygusal içeriklerde araçsallaştırılmasını önlemek amacıyla, etik ilkelere dayalı açık ve denetlenebilir bir içerik politikası oluşturmalıdır. Bu adımlar, içeriklerin daha erişilebilir, kapsayıcı ve etik ilkelere uygun hale gelmesini sağlayacaktır.